



Speech by

**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; FISCAL REPAIR AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (10.55 am): I rise to add to the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2012 and the Fiscal Repair Amendment Bill 2012. On 24 March, the Newman government inherited an unsustainable financial position from the debt and deficit deniers, the fiscally illiterate and incompetent Australian Labor Party. Socialism is all good fun whilst you are busy spending other people's money. Unfortunately for the children of Queensland, the former Queensland Labor government borrowed against their future taxes. The time has come for Labor to apologise to those people who have lost their jobs in the Public Service. Labor's inability to balance the books of Queensland and its addiction to debt and deficit have had a heavy cost on hardworking public servants. Until Queensland has its AAA credit rating back, Labor and its former members, including Kerry Shine, must take responsibility and apologise to hardworking public servants who have lost their jobs. If they want us to take responsibility, it is pretty simple: write out a cheque for \$65 billion, make it out to the future taxpayers of Queensland, we will cash it and then we can all move on.

Put simply, Labor was borrowing more and incurring an ever-increasing interest bill just to pay the wages because of its addiction to wasting Queensland taxpayers' hard earned money. Members should make no mistake: I know the pain a redundancy can cause. I was made redundant after 12 years of loyal service to a not-for-profit organisation. A simple legislative change and there was my redundancy. It was a difficult and challenging time for my family. I worked hard to find a business opportunity and then I worked hard to make that business opportunity successful, and it was. So I understand the pain Labor's incompetent management is causing the families of Public Service workers who find themselves redundant through no fault of their own. They are angry and they have been duped by the unions into believing in the magic pudding economics of Labor and that it is not to blame. Labor is to blame. Its magic pudding economics simply does not add up. You cannot keep spending indiscriminately.

This budget shows that the Newman government is ready to make the hard decisions and is ready to work hard on behalf of the people of Queensland to fix Labor's financial and bureaucratic mess. If Queensland is ever to see its AAA credit rating again, the time has surely come to get Queensland back on track and in the black. So, cometh the hour, cometh the man. We are, indeed, fortunate to have the member for Clayfield as our Treasurer and I congratulate the honourable Treasurer on his budget. This budget is the first LNP budget ever delivered in this place and the most important budget in a generation. This is a truly historic occasion and I for one thank the Treasurer for it.

The government is committed to lowering the cost of living for Queenslanders while, at the same time, investing in front-line services. We will continue to find new ways to deliver services in a more effective and efficient manner. This budget clearly outlines a program that will keep the cost of living down, reinvest in our schools, deliver better health services, support people with a disability and it looks after regional Queensland. The Newman government will lower the cost of living for Queensland families by freezing electricity tariff 11, freezing car rego fees, giving a stamp duty concession on the family home saving up to \$7,000, boosting the patient travel subsidy and we are offering first home buyers a \$15,000 bonus if they build a new home.

This budget will grow the four-pillar economy, revitalise front-line services, and deliver better planning and infrastructure. The Treasurer has said that the 2012-13 state budget would encourage long-term and economic growth across the four pillars of the economy and ensure the cost of living remained low for Queensland families. I commend him for the work that he has done.

I have worked hard to make sure my electorate of Toowoomba North has received a good hearing with the ministers. Although the electorate I represent could always receive more, given the fiscal repair task in front of us I feel we have got our fair share. So I will talk about some of the areas in which we have received funding. In disability services, my electorate has been given by this government funding that will support accommodation services, community access, community participation and respite services. Over \$23 million is being invested in the electorate to provide those services. Overall, the state's contribution towards the specialist disability services budget has achieved a three per cent growth to support and refocus effort on strengthening front-line disability services. This record investment includes new funding to deliver on the government's election commitments such as Parent Connect—an additional respite for young people aged 16 to 25 with a disability.

In the area of communities, we have \$3.149 million for an upgrade of social and rental housing properties across the Darling Downs. Home Assist Secure has been provided with \$672,000 towards funding for Toowoomba Community Housing Services Inc. to help in practical ways with housing related difficulties experienced by elderly and disabled people who wish to remain in their own homes including subsidised assistance with minor home repairs and modifications and security.

Social housing will get a boost in Toowoomba North. \$250,000 will be spent working with the St Vincent de Paul Society of Queensland to complete the construction of four dwellings in Holberton Street; \$165,000 to complete the construction of 10 dwellings in Jellicoe Street; \$486,000 to commence construction of two dwellings in Weetwood Street, Newtown to provide public rental housing for the spinal injuries program to allow clients to exit from the Princess Alexandra Hospital Spinal Injuries Unit. This is particularly close to my heart. As members may be aware, I suffered a serious spinal shock a couple of years ago and had to face for a brief moment how I would deal with the financial situation if I did not recover. Having a facility like this will take a great burden off people at their moment of need, I am sure.

In health, the Health budget is the highest in Queensland's history. \$1.3 billion will be spent on construction to expand and redevelop hospitals across Queensland, \$44 million for better access to emergency and specialist care and \$14 million to assist elderly parent carers of disabled children.

In business, businesses in my area have been quite happy since the election. I have been talking to small and medium business operators and they are starting to experience the benefit of our increasing the tax threshold from \$1 million to eventually \$1.6 million over six years. They are particularly interested in the cutting of red tape and the repealing of the waste levy that has reduced the burden on their businesses.

Regional tourism will receive \$3 million for regional events. I think that will be a great investment in areas such as Toowoomba where we have a couple of big events that bring a lot of people in. I am also pleased to see that money is being allocated for flood recovery in our electorate. As members may be aware, Toowoomba and Toowoomba North were hit hard by the floods. \$117 million is being spent in Toowoomba on reconstruction and recovery works.

In education, Toowoomba North's state school P&C organisations will be eligible for a grant of \$160,000 to clear the backlog of maintenance. The fact that this money will be at their discretion means that local tradies and people in the construction industry will be able to tender for those jobs on a competitive basis and we will be able to get much more bang for our buck in schools. I have 10 state schools in my area so it will be a significant investment in Toowoomba North. There will be more funding for full-time teacher aides for prep classes.

The most exciting part for me is to see the first appropriation of money from the government to deliver on its promise to build a high school at Highfields. An initial amount of \$440,000 will get this project underway and it confirms our commitment made during the election. It is a vital piece of missing infrastructure that the families of Highfields have been crying out for, and under Labor it was promised but never delivered. Even at the eleventh hour before the last election Kerry Shine was out there saying, 'I'll build the school,' and yet their very own plan developed for infrastructure on the Darling Downs by the Labor Party did not have any such project for 30 years. It was just an empty promise made in the lead-up to an election, not like ours. We made the promise, we have now delivered the funding, the school will be built and it will open in 2015.

I welcome the announcement of nearly \$60 million to upgrade the Warrego Highway between Toowoomba and Dalby. The Warrego Highway is the main arterial connecting those on the Darling Downs with my town of Toowoomba and it has obviously experienced unprecedented growth of regular users as the resource industry has grown. I look forward to future budget allocations for this road as the Queensland government's fiscal position improves.

There will be \$5.2 million spent on redeveloping the Toowoomba zone substations to secure our electricity supply into the central CBD. There is also \$1 million being invested in Toowoomba North where the statutory regional planning process is getting under way. This process is incredibly important as it will start to remove some of the tension between agriculture and the resource sector so that we can effectively co-exist, particularly in the Darling Downs area.

In the sporting area, Toowoomba North has done very well. We have \$352,000 to upgrade the hockey playing surfaces in Toowoomba, and I look forward to their annual dinner tonight. \$99,000 is allocated to construct a multipurpose field and install lighting and irrigation and some storage at Kuhl's Road Recreation Reserve in Highfields—an area of my electorate that is growing very fast. \$48,000 is allocated to erect a 15-metre skillion extension to the existing equestrian centre, making the facility a fully enclosed pavilion. \$83,000 is provided to construct changing rooms and amenities to support rugby union in Toowoomba. \$44,000 is allocated to install competition-standard lights supporting the Croquet Club of Newtown. Toowoomba North has three croquet clubs and it now has an area that is lit. I turned those lights on some time ago and members were very pleased to be able to play at night and attract a new generation of players.

A sum of \$56,000 to improve the health and wellbeing of Queensland Indigenous communities will be spent in Toowoomba North to increase participation in sport and recreation for Indigenous Queenslanders and to build and strengthen community capacity to plan and deliver sport and recreation opportunities to those communities. \$331,000 is being spent to employ five local coordinators for multiple sports clubs so they can get their sports actively going in the Toowoomba Regional Council area.

Overall, we have heard a lot of doom and gloom from the unions and Labor about what is happening as we go into this fiscal repair task. Queensland has found itself in a serious position. The time for cheap talk and marches is well and truly over. Those who shout and wave banners must know in their heart of hearts that the debt and deficit train would one day run off the tracks if Labor were left at the helm. Labor has no plan for the future. If they do, they can join me in Toowoomba. We will go doorknocking, and at every door we knock on we can ask how many people live there and ask them for \$1,000 per head just to balance the books this year.

**Mrs Scott:** I was there last weekend and they all spoke out against the government.

**Mr WATTS:** Excellent. Come doorknocking with me, Desley. Let's ask them for \$1,000 in tax—the alternative opportunity for them. Either we cut our cloth accordingly or we tax the hardworking families and retired people of Toowoomba North \$1,000 extra a year. I bet you did not tell them that your plan was to tax them an extra \$1,000. Did you tell them?

**Mrs Scott:** There are other plans.

**Mr WATTS:** Did you mention they would have to pay an extra \$1,000 in tax? I do not think you would have. If you would like to, take the opportunity to come back to Toowoomba and we will doorknock on some doors.

**Mrs Scott:** I am going again in two weeks.

**Mr WATTS:** I will give them my plan, which is to cut our cloth accordingly. You give them your plan, which is to increase taxes and charges on them. Let's see what they say. This budget is about a positive future for Queensland, a Queensland that my children will be proud to call home. This budget shows that we are determined to deliver a more prosperous future for all the people of this great state including the people of Toowoomba North, and I commend it to the House.